DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 049 487 CG 006 296

AUTHOR Milam, Evelyn
TITLE The "SAD" (Sex, Alcohol, Drugs) Scene - A Vehicle for Positive Counseling.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 4p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Alcoholism, *Counseling, Counselors, *Drug Abuse, Interpersonal Competence, Interpersonal Relationship, Needs, *Sexuality, *Youth, Youth Problems

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to demonstrate that the natural process of need orientation stifles the positive communication between client and counselor. Both young people and adults have the need to sharpen their perspectives, to be more perceptive, to be more aware of self and others, and to communicate ideas and feelings more effectively. There is a difference, however, in the level of achievement which tends to fulfill the two groups and communication between adults and youth about these basic needs tends to break down. Young people's desire to improve their interaction with peers and adults often leads them to experiment with sex, alcohol, and drugs (SAD). For many adults and counselors reality about the SAD scene is a personal threat and they tend to impose their values upon young people without listening or trying to understand. Counselor training must be changed or expanded in an effort to help counselors and young people communicate more effectively on these tension producing subjects and to accept each other as worthwhile individuals. (RSM)

ED049487

THE "SAD" (SEX, ALCOHOL, DRUGS) SCENE - A VEHICLE FOR POSITIVE COUNSELING

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Evelyn Milam, Ph.D.

In this presentation I shall attempt to demonstrate that the natural process of need orientation stifles the positive communication between client and counselor. I shall discuss the dearth of counselor knowledge on student initiated movements, the counselor's attempt to play the moralist role, and mutual isolation within the family.

We live in a chemical age. The positive effects which chemicals have brought about have been taught in the classrooms, homes, and elsewhere. The idea that a change in the chemical make-up can improve many aspects of life has been communicated in an impressive manner by the media.

The need to sharpen our perspectives, to be more perceptive, to be more aware of self and others, and to communicate ideas and feelings is intensified today. Much emphasis is placed on these characteristics by the media. Although this need is common to both young people and adults, there seems to be a difference in the levels of achievement which tend to fulfill or satisfy the two groups. Meaningful communication about these basic needs and feelings between young people and adults tend to bog down. Inability to communicate with adults in a satisfying and meaningful way leave young people more susceptible to commercial pressures of the media. A means by which interaction with adults can be improved may be sought through a chemical process. Since many young people got to know themselves through the fantasy world of television, they have not had extensive experience in interacting with peers and adults. A desire to improve their skills in this area often leads them to explore chemicals which seemingly promise so much so quickly. Yet, each person's chemistry

CG 006 296

is an individual thing or matter.

The use of something (drugs, alcohol, sex) to change the chemical make-up is tied up with an individual's personality and self-concept, with his personal problems, and with the pressure of his peers. Even the facts that drugs including alcohol cause changes in the personality and that changes in the chemical processes of the brain cells seem to persist do not deter their usage.

In considering the hierarchy of needs as presented by Maslow, the adult and young person will not be at the same level. This is true of the counselor who is working with the young person. The adults hopefully will be at the achievement level or in some rare cases at the self-actualization level while the young person will still be struggling with his needs for belonging, especially to his peer group, and his need for independence. He is in the process of making important life decisions. His needs for belonging make him susceptible to the pressures of his peers. He wants so much to be independent yet his confidence and self-concept waver between a relationship of dependency and the feeling of security and a relationship of independency and the feeling of freedom. As a result of being at different levels with regard to needs, the counselor or adult and the young person find it difficult to communicate in a meaningful way.

Adults think all life is based on experience. Yet, young people have experienced some things that adults have not. Both are naive about the inconsistencies in their own reasoning. Neither find it easy to understand the values of the other or to try to see things from the perspective of the other. While no one endorses hypocrisy, perhaps everyone is a hyprocrite at times, and the fact continues to foul up the lines of communication.

Often for adults or counselors, reality about the SAD scene becomes a personal threat. Young people and their activities are measured and assessed on the yardstick of adult values, a stringent value structure, or a particular counselor's values. For adults and counselors, the SAD scene immediately becomes a question of morals and is viewed as sin. Yet, adult activities of a similiar nature are viewed in a different context. In working with young people in these areas, adults and counselors tend to become personally threatened and then to become very negative toward the young people. Adults tend to impose their values on young people without listening or trying to understand the values of young people.

Counselors as well as adults are victims of the printed word which is oriented toward fear. Bad news, the spectacular, and the unusual sell more papers. Too often the printed word is taken too literally and as the unquestionable truth. When adults are confronted with reality of the SAD scene in their own community and homes and the counselors are confronted in their schools, they tend to hide their heads in the sands of disbelief. One of the best tactics for avoiding reality is ignorance of the facts about the problems of the SAD scene. Is it really ignorance or is it a situation of ignore-ance? To ignore a situation does not erase the problem or make it go away. Many adults, including counselors have unknowingly constructed their own world of convenient self-deception to blot out the reality of things they do not wish to see or know about.

There is also a problem of the adult or counselor transgressing family lines. Since most adults and counselors do not have a medical background, they resort to those aspects that keep them clear of the physical issue. The physical issue is skirted or dismissed in a light vein mainly because most adults and counselors feel inadequate, or even a degree of shame, to discuss such a subject. On this

subject the lines of communication are closed between adults and young people. Yet, sex, alcohol, and drugs are physical issues. An individual's chemical make-up is altered by any one or all of these. Yet, counselors have been given no training in effective ways to work with young people who are a part of the SAD scene. Counselors and students, whose average ages often reveal a wide gap, tend to speak from different worlds and from different experiences. The world and experiences of young people are entirely foreign to the counselor's frequent superficial appraisal of students in school. Counselor training must be changed and perhaps expanded in an effort to help counselors and young people communicate on more of the tension producing subjects and to accept each other as worthwhile individuals.

Information and messages are communicated in many different ways and not all of them are verbal. Listening with our eyes as well as our ears to behavior, ideas, and feelings increases our powers of perception and understanding. However, listening to behavior is only one aspect of the skill. Learning to respond appropriately is the other important ingredient. Being a good listener involves the ability to respond reflectively. This type of response places no value judgments and tends to encourage the young person to develop further his ideas and feelings that he wants to communicate. The desire to listen, to accept, and to understand without imposing a stringent value structure may be the bridge that reestablishes meaningful communication between adults (parents and/or counselors) and young people.

Evelyn Milam, Ph.D.
Austin College
Sherman, Texas 75090

(Associate Professor of
Education and Psychology)